

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 826

By Clemmons

A RESOLUTION to recognize the beauty and cultural heritage of the Cumberland Plateau region.

WHEREAS, the Cumberland Plateau is recognized for its distinctive geology, its wealth of scenic beauty, its great diversity of natural habitats, and its cultural heritage; and

WHEREAS, the Cumberland Plateau was formed by flowing water and now rises more than 1,000 feet above the Tennessee River Valley to a vast tableland of sandstone and shale dating as far back as 500 million years; and

WHEREAS, the Cumberland Plateau is the world's longest hardwood forested plateau; and

WHEREAS, the Cumberland Plateau includes the historic Cumberland Gap, a natural pass discovered in 1750 by Thomas Walker, through which Daniel Boone blazed the Wilderness Road and which provided westward passage for early American settlers and was of strategic importance during the American Civil War; and

WHEREAS, famed naturalist John Muir was inspired to write and document his crossing of the Cumberland Plateau in the book *A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf*; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee's Cumberland Plateau corridor stretches from this State's northern borders to its southern borders and is located in Bledsoe, Campbell, Cumberland, Fentress, Franklin, Grundy, Marion, Morgan, Overton, Pickett, Putnam, Scott, Sequatchie, Warren, White, and Van Buren counties; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee's Cumberland Plateau corridor is home to four state parks, including Fall Creek Falls State Park, Cumberland Mountain State Park, Cumberland Trail State Park, and South Cumberland State Park; national reserves, such as Big South Fork National

River and Recreation Area; and national parks, such as the Obed Wild and Scenic River and part of the Cumberland Gap National Historic Park; and

WHEREAS, the artistic and rich cultural traditions of the region's inhabitants date back thousands of years, including a recently discovered 6,000-year-old cave painting of a hunter, the oldest known representation in North America; and

WHEREAS, the region's natural beauty, outstanding scenic, recreational, and educational resources, its rich historic fabric, and its longstanding and living cultural traditions represent valuable assets that can, with proper protection, stewardship, and management, continue contributing significantly to local economies and residents' quality of life in every county of the region; and

WHEREAS, neglect and lack of appreciation of Tennessee's Cumberland Plateau can threaten its natural beauty, rich history, and undiscovered relics, severely impair its economic and environmental potential, and greatly diminish the quality of life for corridor residents; and

WHEREAS, by formal request of the State of Tennessee, the U.S. Department of the Interior has designated 75,000 acres of East Tennessee ridgelines along the Cumberland Plateau unsuitable and off-limits for surface mining for the stated purpose of "protect[ing] the Cumberland Plateau's majestic forests, mountains, and streams for future generations"; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of this resolution is to increase public awareness, visitation, conservation, and appreciation of the Cumberland Plateau; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that the Cumberland Plateau corridor is recognized for its natural and scenic beauty, its recreational opportunities, and its cultural heritage, all of which make the corridor an area worth celebrating and protecting for residents and future generations to visit and enjoy.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we applaud the past and future efforts of the United States Department of the Interior to protect all areas of the Cumberland Plateau currently designated by it as "unsuitable and off-limits for surface mining" and thereby safeguard the integrity of this natural treasure.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.